

the Maritime Organization for West and Central Africa, and the African Union;

Whereas the United States Government in the Gulf of Guinea has focused on encouraging multi-layered regional and national ownership in developing sustainable capacity building efforts, including working with partners through the G8++ Friends of Gulf of Guinea Group, to coordinate United States Government maritime security activities in the region;

Whereas the United States Government has assisted the countries of West and Central Africa to enhance regional maritime security through programs such as the "African Partnership Station", operated by United States Naval Forces Africa "to build maritime safety and security by increasing maritime awareness, response capabilities and infrastructure", and the "African Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership", which "enables African partner nations to build maritime security capacity and improve management of their maritime environment through real world law enforcement operations, and through provision of diverse types of training and equipment assistance and participation in diverse regional maritime military exercises", as well as by employing analytical tools such as the Maritime Security Sector Reform Guide; and

Whereas United Nations Security Council Resolution 2039, "expressing its deep concern about the threat that piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea pose to international navigation, security and the economic development of states in the region", was unanimously adopted on February 29, 2012: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) condemns acts of armed robbery at sea, piracy, and other maritime crime in the Gulf of Guinea;

(2) endorses and supports the efforts made by United States Government agencies to assist affected West and Central African countries to build capacity to combat armed robbery at sea, piracy, and other maritime threats, and encourages the President to continue such assistance, as appropriate, within resource constraints; and

(3) commends the African Union, sub-regional entities such as the ECOWAS and ECCAS, and the various international agencies that have worked to develop policy and program frameworks for enhancing maritime security in West and Central Africa, and encourages these entities and their member states to continue to build upon these and other efforts to achieve that end.

REGARDING CRITICAL NEED FOR POLITICAL REFORM IN BANGLADESH

Mr. REED. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 273, S. Res. 318.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 318) expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the critical need for political reform in Bangladesh, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution, which had been reported from the Committee on Foreign Relations, with an amendment to the title.

Mr. REED. I further ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed

to, the preamble be agreed to, the committee reported title amendment be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 318) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 318

Whereas the nation of Bangladesh was established in 1971 after a bitter war in which it split from Pakistan, and for many of the ensuing years until 1990, it was ruled by military governments;

Whereas political tensions have at times turned to violence in Bangladesh, undermining the democratic process;

Whereas the last parliamentary elections in Bangladesh originally scheduled for January 2007, were postponed indefinitely after the military intervened amid rising violence and questions about the electoral process's credibility;

Whereas a military-backed civilian caretaker government held power until December 2008 when Bangladeshis returned to the polls to elect a new parliament for the first time in many years;

Whereas ongoing antagonism between the country's two ruling parties, the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, distracts from the important needs of the country;

Whereas concerns have grown about religious extremism in the otherwise usually tolerant country;

Whereas the United States-Bangladesh relationship is strong and involves many shared interests, including regional economic integration, counterterrorism, counter-piracy, poverty alleviation, food security, regional stability, and mitigation of natural disasters;

Whereas bilateral trade between the United States and Bangladesh now tops \$6,000,000,000 annually, with major United States companies making significant long-term investments in Bangladesh;

Whereas the economy of Bangladesh has grown six percent per year over the last two decades, despite a range of challenges;

Whereas the poverty rate in Bangladesh dropped from 40 percent to 31 percent between 2005 and 2010—a notable accomplishment in a country in which poverty has been deep and widespread;

Whereas the Grameen Bank's revolutionary microfinance lending to the poor has helped reduce poverty not only in Bangladesh, but has served as an innovative and powerful model for helping the poor elsewhere in the world;

Whereas the Department of State, Congress, and other high profile international voices have recognized the Grameen Bank's innovative work and expressed great concern over actions by the Government of Bangladesh that undermine the Bank's independence;

Whereas Bangladesh, an example of a moderate and diverse Muslim-majority democracy, is scheduled to have national elections on January 5, 2014;

Whereas, in 2013, hundreds of Bangladeshis died in violent clashes as a result of political violence and unrest, and some opposition and human rights activists have been arrested;

Whereas trials held by the International Crimes Tribunal in Bangladesh—set up to prosecute those responsible for atrocities committed during Bangladesh's war of lib-

eration with Pakistan in 1971—have fallen short of international standards;

Whereas the Government of Bangladesh eliminated a constitutional provision requiring the governing party to cede power to a neutral caretaker government three months before an election;

Whereas the 18-member opposition coalition in Bangladesh called for numerous nationwide strikes and transportation blockades in 2013, resulting in dozens of deaths;

Whereas Bangladeshi students cannot attend school and complete mandatory exams due to the strikes and blockades and related violence;

Whereas many citizens of Bangladesh have had their work and daily activities disrupted due to the strikes and related violence, which come at a cost to the economy and stability of Bangladesh;

Whereas a stable, moderate, secular, Muslim-majority democracy with the world's seventh-largest population, and the world's fourth-largest Muslim population, will have lasting positive impacts in the region and beyond;

Whereas the success of the democratic process in Bangladesh is of great importance to the United States and the world; and

Whereas during the week of December 8, 2013, United Nations Assistant Secretary General Oscar Fernandez-Taranco visited Bangladesh to foster political dialogue between Bangladeshi political parties and leaders in order to bring a halt to violence and allow for a credible peaceful election: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) condemns the political violence in Bangladesh and urges political leaders in that country to engage directly and substantively in a dialogue toward free, fair, and credible elections;

(2) expresses great concern about the continued political deadlock in Bangladesh that distracts from the country's many important challenges;

(3) urges political leaders in Bangladesh to take immediate steps to rein in and to condemn the violence as well as to provide space for peaceful political protests;

(4) urges political leaders in Bangladesh to ensure the safety and access of observers in its upcoming elections;

(5) supports ongoing efforts by United Nations Assistant Secretary General Oscar Fernandez-Taranco to foster political dialogue between political factions in Bangladesh; and

(6) urges the Government of Bangladesh to ensure judicial independence, end harassment of human rights activists, and restore the independence of the Grameen Bank.

The title was amended so as to read: "A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the critical need for political dialogue in Bangladesh, and for other purposes."

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE UKRAINIAN PEOPLE

Mr. REED. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 274, S. Res. 319.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 319) expressing support for the Ukrainian people in light of President Yanukovich's decision not to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union.